

Report No. 3.4 North Coast Regional Waste Investment Project and Richmond Valley Council's waste update for Councils

Directorate: Infrastructure Services

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Summary:

10 The Report provides the Committee with an overview of the North Coast Waste Investment Review Project to date, and how this has coincided with the NSW Governments Policy and Planning around Energy from Waste.

15 The intent of the North Coast Waste Investment Review Project, from Council's point of view, is to determine the volume and types of materials we are dealing with as a region, the possible solutions for avoidance, reuse, recycling, recovery and as a last resort energy recovery and disposal. Through working with neighbouring Councils, solutions for a range of waste streams have been discussed, with a move to a Circular Economy model at the forefront.

20 Concurrently, the NSW government has put in place regulation and policy around Energy from Waste and stipulated locations in which it would allow this to occur, which includes the Richmond Valley Jobs Precinct.

RECOMMENDATION:

25 **That the Climate Change and Resource Recovery Advisory Committee notes the report.**

Report

Background

- 5 Byron Shire Council is one of 13 Councils in the NSW North Coast region participating in the North Coast Waste Investment Review Project (The Project) which commenced in 2019. The Project has considered options to develop regional responses to collective waste challenges, including infrastructure to divert residual waste (the waste left after resource recovery and recycling) from landfill, to enhance resource recovery rates and to support the security and local opportunity of the recovered materials supply chain through to end markets.
- 10 The project has been driven by Richmond Valley Council with support and expertise from Council Waste staff and General Managers from all participating Councils.

Stage 1: Waste Stocktake and North Coast Regional Waste Investment Review Report

- 15 Thus far the Project has delivered a *Waste Stocktake* analysis, assessing the amount and type of waste within the region, as well as the infrastructure that currently exists to deal with this waste. On this basis the *North Coast Regional Waste Investment Review Report* was developed. These reports provide the information base for Councils to test the market for Alternate Waste Treatment (AWT) solutions for all waste streams that are environmentally, economically and socially acceptable to North Coast communities. AWT
- 20 refers to a range of activities that process mixed solid waste into products (such as compost, fuel, biogas, energy) as an alternative to landfilling. Modelling included financial analysis, carbon profiling and also described opportunities to support the emergence of a local circular economy.

Stage 2: Market Sounding and Expression of Interest

- 25 In the second stage of the Project, 9 of the original 13 Councils committed to participation in a Market Sounding and Expression of Interest (EOI), for the establishment of regional waste facilities with a focus on alternative waste treatment solutions for both residual and recyclable waste streams. Consultants MRA were engaged to undertake the EOI process on behalf of the 9 Councils. This allowed companies who have the suitable technology to
- 30 deal with the volume and classifications of waste within the region to put forward a proposal, and for these proposals to be assessed transparently.

- Richmond Valley Council have received submissions to the EOI put to the market. Responses covered residual, recycle and food organic/green organic streams. A wide range of technologies have been put forward, including energy from waste facilities.
- 35 Submissions have been assessed using the methodology outlined in the EOI documents. MRA has assisted Richmond Valley Council with the EOI process and assessment. The EOI process has demonstrated that there is strong market interest in establishing alternative waste technologies on the North Coast.

Energy from Waste: NSW Government

5 Concurrent to the North Coast Regional Waste Investment Project, the NSW Government has released the *Energy from Waste Infrastructure Plan* to support the *NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041*. The *Plan* recognises that thermal treatment of waste will form part of the future solution for managing residual waste in NSW, providing an opportunity to replace less environmentally sound energy sources, such as coal-fired power stations, and avoid methane emissions from landfill. Alternate waste treatment will not be prioritised over reduction and reuse.

10 In July 2022 the NSW Government put in place new energy from waste regulation - *The Protection of the Environment Operations (General) Amendment (Thermal Energy from Waste) Regulation 2022* which put into law the Government's *Energy from Waste Infrastructure Plan* to strategically locate energy from waste in four designated locations in NSW to maximise efficiencies in infrastructure, waste management, innovation and energy recovery. The Richmond Valley Regional Job Precinct has been identified as one of these four locations.

15 Any proposals within the priority infrastructure areas would be required to comply with current planning and environmental legislation and policies, including the NSW Government's Policy Statement on Energy from Waste Facilities. This policy statement, released in June 2021, provides for extensive community consultation and includes some of the most rigorous environmental controls in the world.

20 Under the Policy, proposals must:

- Meet current international best practice techniques, including emissions controls
- Use technologies that are proven, well understood and capable of handling the waste inputs
- Meet technical, thermal efficiency and resource recovery criteria
- Undertake monitoring with real-time feedback.

Furthermore, such facilities will only be supported where they are used to manage residual waste, not as an alternative to recycling.

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North Coast Waste Investment Review Project: As at November 2022

35 Private companies have made submissions via the EOI process. The details of these submissions have not yet been made available to the participating Councils, and there are several other steps required before the Project would proceed to this stage if at all.

Richmond Valley Council, as the lead in the procurement process, has provided the following information with regards to next steps;

40 *To further consider the possibilities of an Alternate Waste Treatment solutions for the North Coast, the following next steps are proposed:*

- *Confirming the depth of support from the State Government and any funding that may be available for Alternate Waste Treatment facilities*
- *Exploring the process by which the Parkes Energy from Waste facility is being procured, and how proposals in Lithgow and Goulburn are progressing*

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- *Exploring the contractual arrangements underpinning the Energy from Waste facilities that have been developed in Western Australia*
 - *Developing relationships with potential advisors*
 - *Developing a communications strategy to inform the community on all options*
 - *Developing potential procurement strategies for the different options*
 - *Continued liaison and partnering with North Coast councils*

10 Within the Byron Shire a long-term sustainable option for residual waste management is a key priority, given the sole licensed landfill is scheduled for closure and remediation within the next 12 months. Currently residual waste is transported to Ti-Tree Bioenergy Landfill in South-East Queensland for disposal, however a more localised facility is preferable.

15 Whilst individual Councils have committed to being a part of the Market Sounding and EOI process, this does not commit to continuation in the project overall. Council's participation will be determined by the opportunities presented through this process and a rigorous assessment process which includes consultation with Councillors and alignment with Councils Strategies which strongly preference Circular Economy and Resource Recovery Initiatives above any disposal options.

20 **Next steps**

The Climate Change and Resource Recovery Advisory Committee will be kept updated as more information comes to hand in relation to the North Coast Waste Investment Review Project, as well as any developments in relation to Richmond Valley Council and Energy from Waste.

25 Councils are simultaneously looking at a range of options which include Projects to process construction and demolition waste and keep it in circulation, further food and garden processing facilities, recycling through Materials Recovery Facilities and plastics processing. Future projects aim to assist in designing out waste at the source, implementing reuse programs to eliminate single use materials and ensuring recycled content materials are pulled through supply chains, decreasing the need for disposal options

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Strategic Considerations

[Towards Zero Integrated Waste Strategy 2019 to 2029 - Byron Shire Council \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/towards-zero-integrated-waste-strategy-2019-to-2029-byron-shire-council)

35 **Community Strategic Plan and Operational Plan**

CSP Objective	CSP Strategy	DP Action	Code	OP Activity
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3: Nurtured Environment We nurture and enhance the natural environment	3.5: Minimise waste and encourage recycling and resource recovery practices	3.5.3: Waste collection and landfill - Maintain and enhance solutions to recover / treat / dispose of residual waste	3.5.3.1	Maintain and manage Waste and Resource Recovery Collection, processing and disposal contracts
3: Nurtured Environment We nurture and enhance the natural environment	3.5: Minimise waste and encourage recycling and resource recovery practices	3.5.3: Waste collection and landfill - Maintain and enhance solutions to recover / treat / dispose of residual waste	3.5.3.2	Support the progression of a regional; alternative waste treatment facility in alignment of the adopted strategy and relevant resolutions

Legal/Statutory/Policy Considerations

[NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041](#)

[NSW Energy from Waste Policy Statement](#)

5 [Energy from Waste Infrastructure Plan \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)